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SCENES IN THE MUSEUM DURING A CONCERT

THE MUSEUM CONCERTS

THE fourth annual season of concerts by a symphony orchestra in the Museum was brought to a close on Saturday evening, March 25, when the attendance was 9,855, the largest in the history of these concerts with the exception of one evening last year on which it passed the 10,000 mark. As heretofore, the concerts were divided into two series of four each, one in January the other in March, and the total attendance at the eight amounted to 53,391. This was about seven thousand less than last year, but the decrease is easily accounted for by the fact that on three out of the eight evenings the weather was about the worst we had during the winter, with storms of snow, rain, and high winds, and the falling off then was recovered whenever the weather was good. Certainly no one who has watched those vast audiences can have the least doubt that they are as keenly interested as ever in the music that is provided for them, and that their appreciation has grown with the quality of the programs selected, which this year have attained the full dignity of symphony concerts.

And certainly no one who has not seen these audiences can understand their extraordinary character. In the article which follows, David Mannes, our conductor, has recorded his impression of them, and it is shared with the utmost gratification by all of us who have watched the result of what started as an experiment but has proved to be the response to a public craving. To what he says on the subject it is only necessary to add the reminder that

these concerts are offered free in the fullest sense, without any restriction whatever, not even tickets being required. The doors are open and all who like may enter. Possibly some may have looked forward to this part of our experiment with a certain misgiving as to its effect upon the safety of our collections. It is therefore a pleasure to record that up to the end of our fourth season there has been no symptom of disorder, no case has been jostled by the crowds about it, and not an object in the Museum has been injured. What better testimony could be given of the respect of the public for the place as well as the entertainment thus placed at its disposal?

I have spoken of these concerts as an experiment. It is an experiment that hitherto has been made possible by the generosity of a few friends of the Museum who have come forward each year and volunteered to pay the cost of the orchestra of fifty-four men. First among these is John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who has contributed the cost of one series of four concerts each year upon the condition that a second series should be provided by others. This year the second four have been given respectively by four of our Trustees—Robert W. de Forest, the president, Edward S. Harkness, Henry Walters, and Arthur Curtiss James. It would be a great thing both for the Museum and the public if an experiment which in all other respects has proved such a triumphant success, and such a benefit to the people, could now be placed upon a permanent basis by an endowment which would insure its future as a regular part of the work of the Museum. E. R.